



Ray Graham  
Association

*Empowering people with disabilities*

September 19, 2011

RE: Ray Graham Association – Written Statement to the Human Services Commission

Dear Members of the Human Services Commission,

I write to you today on behalf of the nearly 2,000 children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities served by Ray Graham Association (RGA), their families, and our 425 staff members. I thank you for the opportunity to provide a written statement for your review and consideration.

I am proud that despite the economic challenges we face, we stand firmly in our dedication to deliver a high quality innovative service. We stand firmly in our commitment to facilitate and / or deliver outcomes that have a personal impact on people's lives, the community, and demonstrate positive stewardship of public funds.

I am disheartened to tell you that fiscal year 2011 budget reductions of 5% for respite services and the total elimination of extended employment supports directly impacted the end user of services. RGA operates a respite voucher program that passes along an allocation of funds (not actual cash) to families. Simply stated, 5% fewer families will be served this year. Respite services keep families healthy and intact, and reduce the need for more comprehensive and costly 24 hour services. With the total elimination of job coaching for individuals with the most significant disabilities, people lost gainful community employment, lost their social roles and their confidence.

Over the past decade, cost of living adjustments have been practically non-existent and most action has been related to reductions in funds and rising costs of health care, workers compensation, fuel and other consumables. In FY10, RGA partnered with DHS to initiate the conversion of several programs from a state funded grant in aid system to Medicaid Waiver. This process allowed Illinois to capture what is believed to be as much as \$50 million in revenue that was not invested back into disability services. The impact on RGA was realized at the beginning of this new fiscal year, which is nearly a \$500,000 loss. Since 2008 we have eliminated more than 30 personnel, closed one of our Community Learning Center locations and have made adjustments to our health insurance package that is more costly to our staff and that we fear will result in more uninsured. Further, at any point in time, Illinois may owe RGA as much as \$5 million.

Our organization supports the Governor's announcement to close the two State Operated Developmental Centers (Jacksonville and Mabley) that serve people with developmental disabilities. It will be important that a well thought out plan emphasizes the needs of the individuals first and foremost. Even though budgetary influences may drive the process, we are still talking about people's lives and need to make a good match with a community provider. Further, the current model to assign individual rates in the community system does not represent the actual need for resources to serve people today. A thoughtful process to ensure that money

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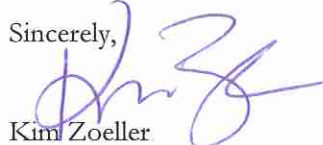
follows the person must be in place. I am confident that community based services, even if funded at a somewhat higher rate to accommodate people's needs, will still be a considerable savings.

Over the past 3 years, Ray Graham Association has accepted 8 people into residential programs directly from state institutions. I'm happy to tell you that each is thriving, growing and living a safe and productive life in the community. The average reimbursement rate we receive for these individuals is \$54,654/year. This is on average, about 1/3 the cost of serving these very same individuals in state institutions. I've enclosed a few references to some of these people that I hope you'll take a moment to read – the lives of those remaining in institutions depends directly upon the actions you take as a Committee. I'd also like to invite each of you to visit us in person, or at least another community provider in your local area to confirm the capacity and interest community providers have in supporting all Illinois residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live healthy and productive lives in the community.

Further, rebalancing the system from costly institutional care to quality economically sound, person-centered, community based options is critical, not just for existing community service providers like Ray Graham Association, but also for Illinois citizens with disabilities and their families in need of services. According to our State's own Prioritization of Unmet Needs database (PUNS), an unduplicated number of 21,348 people are in need of some community based service for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. A total of 3,344 are in crisis today and need emergency services, while 11,613 people have identified critical needs.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns you might have. I can be reached at [kimz@raygraham.org](mailto:kimz@raygraham.org) or 630-620-2222. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kim Zoeller', is written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Kim Zoeller  
President and CEO



## Ray Graham Association – Partners for the Solution Setting the Record Straight...

Despite the suggestion that people leaving state institutions cannot be supported in the community, Ray Graham Association (RGA) has supported a number of people to move from isolated and costly state institutions, into neighborhood homes where they're able to explore and become a part of their community and begin to experience a productive and meaningful life. Families are overwhelmingly positive about receiving Community Integrated Living Arrangement (CILA) services through RGA, and thankful that they and their loved one have become a part of the Ray Graham family.



Angel lived in state institutions from the time he was 5 until finally moving into his own "home" 3 years ago. One of the excuses for Angel living in an institution was that his uncontrolled seizure activity required continuous nursing presence. With support and determination from RGA, Angel's medications have been adjusted with great success. While he requires continuous close monitoring, Angel's condition doesn't require him to live in a segregated institution. Now Angel fully participates in the life of the community, including attending a Community Learning Center during the week, volunteering, participating in activities at his home and going out with friends on the weekend. Staff became aware of Angel's interest in animals, and have created numerous, ongoing opportunities for him to interact with a variety of different animals, including pet therapy, visiting the horses and barn area at an RGA program site, and visiting pet stores near his home.

Billy had lived in state institutions since 1959, until finally moving to an RGA CILA home less than a year ago. Billy and his family visited his home several times before moving, to make it a smooth and comfortable transition. Billy was able to get to know his housemates and staff and was excited when he got to join them permanently. Being close to his family was a priority for Billy and his family. Billy's family expressed surprise that they could visit with him so freely and that he could join them at important family events; his mother reported that staff at the institution had discouraged them from visiting with Billy and establishing a meaningful relationship with him. The family experienced their first RGA Holiday Party this year, and was thrilled to see so many other families present and see how happy their son was with his new friends. A treasured memory of this event for both Billy and his family is the picture staff took of them in front of the Christmas tree – the first family photo they had with their son.

